



U.S. Senator Michael Bennet interacts with students of Ballygunge Government High School, while Consul General Dean Thompson looks on.



## BULLETIN - FEBRUARY 2012



### Events at a Glance

**February 1-2**  
**Workshop on**  
**Communicative English**  
(Kolkata)

**February 3-5**  
**Youth Festival** (Guwahati)

**February 24**  
**Violin-tabla concert**  
(Kolkata)

**February 24**  
**Black History Month at the**  
**Youth Corner** (Kolkata)

**February 27**  
**Black History Month**  
**commemoration** (Kolkata)

**February 29**  
**Film Show: To Sir With**  
**Love** (Kolkata)

### Holiday

**February 20:** Washington's  
Birthday

### Your Date With U.S. History

#### THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN CULTURE

by Saikat Sarkar, Assistant Professor of English, Bankura Christian College

This month is designated by the U.S. Government as Black History Month. We take the occasion to reflect on the contribution of African Americans to the U.S. socio-cultural fabric. K. Anthony Appiah, Professor of Afro-American Studies and Philosophy at Harvard, has observed, "When it comes to diversity it seems we all march to the beat of a single drummer." Though the highly monolingual society of the U.S. is marked by a utilitarian individualism, Afro-Americans have long been a conspicuous presence in the U.S. Years of living in the mainstream culture of the U.S. has led African Americans to form a hybridized entity within it. The anthropologist Melville Herskovits has found a continuum of the African cultural practice among the African Americans.

African Americans have retained their ancestral oral tradition. The call-response pattern of this oral tradition of folktales and folk-music got transformed later into the influential blues and jazz traditions which changed the American musicscape. African Americans have also contributed in introducing dance forms like Lindy Hop, jitterbug and swing which influenced modern American dancing. Despite accepting English as the predominant language, African Americans have retained vernacular languages like Creole and Gullah. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a variety of the American English language closely associated with the speech of, but not exclusive to, African Americans. In literature the Harlem Renaissance of the 20s, and the later Black Arts movement have encouraged African Americans writers to be alive to their ethnic roots. African Americans writers from Wheatley to Morrison have eked out a literary world which is streaked with African elements. Religion has also been a distinctive area where African Americans have preserved their cultural identity by retaining their indigenous religious practices under the rubric of mainstream Christianity.

Though the sociologist Gunnar Myrdal has observed that African Americans have lost touch with their African roots, one may argue against him and contend that they have contributed to the enrichment of the American culture by being an integral part of it on the one hand, and by retaining their ethnic entity on the other.



### HORACE GREELEY



February 3, 1811, marks the birth of Horace Greeley, a founder of the Liberal Republican Party, a reformer, a politician, and an outspoken opponent of slavery. He founded and edited the New York Tribune, which became America's most influential newspaper from the 1840s to the 1870s and established Greeley's reputation as the greatest editor of his day. Greeley used the paper to promote the Whig and Republican parties, as well as opposition to slavery, and a host of reforms ranging from vegetarianism to socialism.

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Offices are open from 8 am - 5 pm; Monday - Friday  
The American Library is open from 10 am - 6 pm, Monday - Saturday

**YOUR TURN**

*The Bulletin wants to hear from you ... your thoughts, your opinions, your feedback. Write in with*



- a report of an American Center event you attended
- your experiences in cross-cultural encounters
- a photo that brings out the joys and sorrows of human life
- a human interest anecdote.

*Only email submissions will be considered for publication. The Bulletin reserves the right of submission selection, editing and publication.*

*Send your submissions by email to [kolkatapas@state.gov](mailto:kolkatapas@state.gov) by the 10th of each month.*

**NOTES FROM THE FIELD**

Durga Khaitan, who traveled to the U.S. on an exchange program, recounts her experiences thus: "Every single American I came across during my stay was not only helpful, but smiling, patient, and kind. At Washington, I fell down and injured myself one late evening and I found more than ten people around me worried and genuinely wanting to help me. In their honest kindness each one of them forgot the calling of their fast life and were ready to take me to hospital or my hotel or to wherever I needed to be. It was overwhelming. On another occasion, when I needed to buy some postage stamps and was asking for directions, one American accompanied me to the shop, walking with me for more than a kilometer just to ensure that I got to the right place."



*The photograph shows Durga at the Sentencing Commission in Washington, DC.*

**Workshop on Communicative English**

Kolkata: February 1-2, 9 a.m.



The American Center presents a workshop on Communicative English conducted by English Language Fellow Joseph Dwalibee who is currently based in Ahmedabad. The workshop is targeted to school-teachers. *Entry is restricted.*

**Contact: 3984-6392 or [dassx@state.gov](mailto:dassx@state.gov)**

**Alcheringa 2012**

Guwahati: February 3-5

The American Center partners with Alcheringa 2012, the annual youth festival of IIT Guwahati. Events include a quiz, a debate, a blues music competition, a hip-hop dance competition, and a Radio Jockey hunt. A soon-to-open American Corner booth will be present, along with social media activities in the American Center booth. The American Center will also visit educational institutions and NGOs during this period.



**Contact: 3984-6392 or [dassx@state.gov](mailto:dassx@state.gov)**

**Violin-Tabla Concert**

Kolkata: February 24, 6.30 p.m.



The American Center presents a concert by Michael Braudy and Indradeep Ghosh on the violin, with Pt. Sujit Saha on the tabla. Michael Braudy specializes in Western classical and Celtic music, and the music of India. He has explored the effects of music on health, and teaches workshops on sound and meditation. Indradeep Ghosh is a graded artist in All India Radio and has participated in the Asia Festival in Barcelona, and the Baba Alauddin, Dover Lane and Salt Lake music festivals. Pt. Sujit Saha has participated in many festivals, including the Dover Lane Music Conference, Kolkata. He has visited the U.S. as a teacher of Indian classical music. *Entry is open to all until capacity is reached.*

**Contact: 3984-6324 or [mullicksx@state.gov](mailto:mullicksx@state.gov)**

***All programs are subject to change. Please confirm closer to the date of the event.***

### Celebrating Black History Month at the Youth Corner

Kolkata: February 24, 3 p.m.



Mrs. Jane Thompson will guide students through a reading of *If you traveled on the underground railroad*, introducing them to the leaders of the African-American movement. The program will be held in the American Library. *Entry is by invitation only.*

**Contact:** 3984-6394 or [sennx@state.gov](mailto:sennx@state.gov)

### Performing Arts and the Afro-American Contribution

Kolkata: February 27, 9 a.m.

The American Center presents a day-long program to commemorate Black History Month, comprising a seminar with members of the American Library Book Club and the American Literature Study Circle, a play-reading session, documentary screenings, and a musical journey through American roots music. *Entry to the seminar is by invitation only, while entry to the musical journey scheduled to begin at 4 pm is open to all until capacity is reached.*



**Contact:** 3984-6324 or [mullicksx@state.gov](mailto:mullicksx@state.gov)

#### Film Show:

#### **To Sir With Love**

(105 mins)

February 29,

3 p.m.: Kolkata



This 1967 classic starring Sidney Poitier, Judy Geeson, and Christian Roberts depicts an idealistic engineer-trainee and his experiences in teaching a group of rambunctious white high school students from the slums of London's East End. The film addresses issues of race and class, and offers a window into the London of the mid-1960s. Parents need to know that kids will be seeing fist fights in class and students behaving rudely towards their teacher, although their misbehavior is mild by contemporary film standards.

**Contact:** 3984-6337 or [pattanayakpr@state.gov](mailto:pattanayakpr@state.gov)

## ReaderSpeak

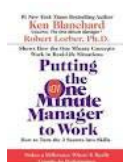
### **On the Alumni Experiential Workshop on Emotional Intelligence, December 2011**

The best part of the workshop was the highly interactive approach where each participant had to think-pair-share their real life experiences, thereby undertaking a journey into the deep recesses of their minds to respond to certain innovative tasks on worksheets. The trainer, Sanjay Upendram, was brilliant in his elucidation of the intricate workings of the human brain, and the ways to foster one's emotional intelligence to meet the challenges of the 21st century! In a nutshell, the workshop has been an odyssey towards self-discovery! *Arindam Sengupta, Kolkata*



I saw a journalist trying to learn how to cope with his anger at the wastage of essential resources in an economically underprivileged society, a judge sharing the grief of a son convicted by her for murdering his mother, a teacher sharing the reactions of a not-so-disciplined pupil, and another eminent journalist sharing his emotional high at being the first person to be informed of news of international significance by none other than the head of State. All gained useful and valuable insights into their professional and personal character by means of improved and enriched emotional wealth. *Durga Khaitan, Kolkata*

### A COMPELLING ADDITION TO THE AMERICAN LIBRARY'S COLLECTION



**PUTTING THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER TO WORK** by Ken Blanchard & Robert Lorber. HarperCollins, 2006. Almost everyone who reads the *One Minute Manager* loves the book, both for its simplicity and clarity. The *One Minute Manager* process needs to become a new habit and expand the skills of both the one minute manager and the people who work for her/him. That's where putting the *One Minute Manager to Work* comes into play.



**American Center's SMS service:****Dial US4U at 9243000111**

In keeping with the times, we are delighted to report the successful functioning of a new service-- *Tunespray*. The best feature of this service is SMS notification to you about our upcoming programs. Apart from standard SMS notifications, this feature comes with some other useful tools:

- ✳ SMS your participation in American Center events.
- ✳ Give us feedback on events or policies.
- ✳ Interact live with us regarding events through Text 2 Poll and Message Boards.
- ✳ Voice your opinion through SMS.

To avail yourself of information on American Library membership, reference services, and programs, type: "US4U<space>LIBRARY 9243000111".

**American Center' Facebook Page****[www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata)**

In an age of social media, the American Center is delighted to report the successful functioning of its Facebook Page. This Page is designed not only to promote upcoming events, programs, interactive sessions, and releases of new books and articles at the American Center, but also to get feedback from our audiences through their active participation in online conversations and opinion polls.

To avail yourself of information about upcoming events or to interact with us, please visit our Facebook Page at the above-mentioned link and "Like" us to get yourself added to our page.

**Surf On Our Turf**

The American Library invites you to blog at:

**KOLKATA BOOK WORMS**<http://blogs.usembassy.gov/kolkata/>

Join our online discussion forum to share your thoughts on what you have read, recommend books to read, and get information on the library's recent additions and events.

**WORLD CANCER DAY**

February 4 marks World Cancer Day on which people, businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations work together to help the general public learn more about the different types of cancer, how to watch out for it, treatments and preventative measures. Various activities and events include television, radio, online, and newspaper advertisements, and articles that focus on the fight against cancer; campaigns targeted at parents to help them minimize the risk of cancer within their families; breakfasts, luncheons or dinners aimed at raising funds for cancer research or projects that help to fight cancer; and public information booths featuring information kits, fact sheets, booklets, posters and other items that promote cancer awareness, prevention, risk reduction, and treatment. Some countries use World Cancer Day to promote campaigns on various cancer issues, such as breast cancer, lung cancer, skin cancer, and cancer in children.

Source: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-cancer-day>

**JANUARY IN PICTURES**

Standup comedian Azhar Usman enthralls the audience at Srijoni auditorium, Durgapur.



American Center director Jeffrey Reneau introduces Debbie Baker, author of "The Convert" at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival at Park Hotel.



U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tom Udall share a moment of prayer at the Mother House, Kolkata.



American Center Director Jeffrey Reneau meets and greets college principals at the American Center.

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